

Germany – Black Forest Trail, August 2018

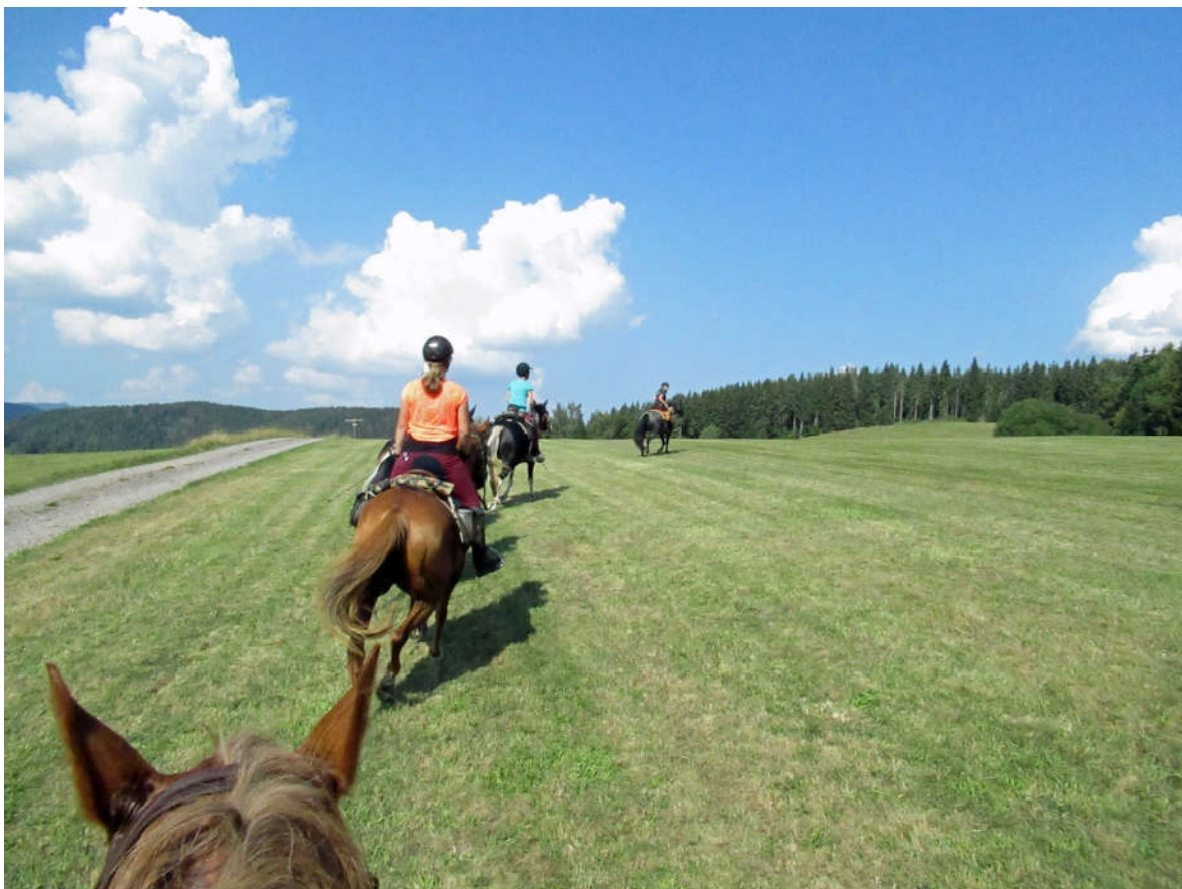


After a lovely, sunny ride, past real Black Forest cows and over the Feldberg. In the afternoon, I arrived at the farm, which lies in the middle of a forest clearing. Once there, I was warmly welcomed by the owner and met my fellow riders for the first time. The evening was free, so I had time to look around the farm. A few cats were wandering across the yard. One tomcat was particularly affectionate and posed to be stroked. The stable is right next to the farm, and the paddocks are all around the house. The paths for the horses to feed, drink and reach shelter are very well laid out. The horses are relaxed and very well trained, and were happily munching on hay. Over dinner, we discussed the plans for the coming days whilst enjoying delicious, regional cuisine.

After a wonderful, hearty breakfast, we headed to the stables to get to know the horses. Today's plan is a ride through the surrounding countryside before setting off on the trail. After grooming and saddling up, we rode across fields and then through the woods. At a brisk pace, we passed Black Forest huts, wayside crosses and rode extensively through the woods. The terrain was hilly and the horses were full of energy and lively. After the three-hour ride, there was still some time in the afternoon to explore the surroundings, read a book or go for a swim in nearby Kirnbergsee, which is within walking distance. There will be plenty of opportunities for swimming over the next few days. So – be sure to bring your swimming gear – it's well worth it. Over a delicious dinner, everyone was already looking forward to the start of the trail ride the following morning.

Today we set off. Through the mountains towards Lenzkirch. We rode at a brisk pace with some wonderful gallops across the fields. We've been very lucky with the weather this week and the sun has been shining almost constantly. In the forest, the horses faced a few climbs, which they mastered skilfully. You could feel completely safe in the saddle. Our guide, the owner of the stables, had a story to tell about many of the spots along the way, and so we rode on cheerfully. During the ride, we stopped twice – once for the horses to graze and once for the riders to rest. In the evening, we arrived at our destination, a trail riding centre. The horses were unsaddled and rolled around contentedly in the pasture. The riders also relaxed over dinner at the inn opposite the guesthouse, which was just a few hundred metres away from the stables. The guesthouse was brilliant. I hadn't expected quite so much comfort. Just like at the stables, everything was very clean, well-organised and comfortable.

After breakfast, we set off towards the mountains. We were treated to fantastic panoramic views of the Black Forest and the Feldberg time and again. We rode first towards Tittisee-Neustadt, straight down to the lake. Then we headed for our lunch break, passing through cow pastures and enjoying lovely views of the lake. We had our lunch break at a rustic inn from which, even as we arrived, "local" music. A male voice choir from Bräunlingen cheerfully belted out one song after another. A true Black Forest original. Refreshed, we continued towards St. Märgen, where we stabled the horses for the night at a farm that also boards Black Forest chestnut horses. After tending to the horses, we headed to the inn. This cosy inn is situated right in the centre of the village and has an adjoining, well-frequented pub. After a good dinner and a restful night's sleep, we set off into the next day.



Today's route is perfect for true mountain enthusiasts. From St. Märgen, we headed towards Furtwangen via the Brend. As the route is quite steep in places, we alternated between riding downhill and uphill. In total, the horses covered around 700 metres of elevation gain today. A fantastic achievement! Riding past steep slopes with streams, and at a leisurely pace for a change, there was plenty to discover. Although it was tiring, I really enjoyed the day, as we rode through beautiful, unspoilt woodland. In the evening, we didn't manage to fit in the planned visit to the clock museum and decided against visiting the following morning before the ride as well. The horses were stabled with a farmer today and had a lovely pasture to relax in. Once the horses had been looked after, we set off into town to our guesthouse. For dinner, we walked a short way through the town to a quaint restaurant serving all sorts of regional specialities. It was really very good.



And so the final day of riding on our tour through the Black Forest dawned. We rode at a particularly brisk pace today, and the horses were fit and lively. They knew full well that we were heading home. We rode briskly through the valley along the Breg, the longest source river of the Danube. After the last hill separating us from our home stable, a surprise (which remains a secret) awaited us for lunch. After our break, we rode back to the farm along forest paths overgrown with ferns at the sides, where we were greeted with joyful whinnies. Afterwards, we unsaddled, groomed and fed the horses once more. Tonight's dinner was brilliant! Really tasty. The evening drew to a close with a glass of wine and stories about the ride.

After breakfast the next morning, everyone headed home with lovely memories. What I really liked was that at one point I was asked what the date was. That's a sure sign that you've really got into the holiday spirit.

- Jil Dorn

Information about the programme is available online at
www.reiterreisen.com/gircav.htm